

# PEOPLE POINTS

February, 2003

## COACHING

### It's NOT just for Executives!

Are you or your managers ever at a loss for words when confronting an employee's poor work habits and behaviors? Does poor performance sometimes go unchallenged, in the hope that people will straighten out on their own? Coaching the employee rather than invoking the wrath of the policy and procedure manual will work better.

**Coaching is not just for upper level executives; coaching at all levels can have significant impact on today's contemporary employee.**

That command and control supervising style learned years ago may have worked then but now contemporary employees expect individual attention.

While rules and procedures are still vital for control, conformity and

compliance; we have evolved!

Employees today want to know when they are doing well and if improvements are needed; they expect immediate feedback. People respond positively to honest information, delivered with logic and reason for change.

Supervisors know motivating employees can be challenging. Good coaches recognize people are already motivated but they are motivated by their own reasons, not ours.

The most satisfying & productive relationships are authentic where the thinking / saying gaps are small. People grow best when an authentic & caring coach helps them see the impact of their behavior. Coaching then is about growing people.

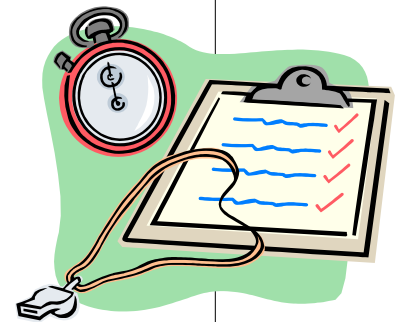
Unfortunately, the

typical Supervisory Approach starts with Problem Focused Questions like:

- What's wrong?
- Why do I have this problem?
- Whose fault is it?
- How long has this been going on?
- What is this costing me?

Notice the negative tone of these questions. They are accusatory in nature and tend to elicit confrontation and raise stress levels. There's immediate 'blame' placed on the person.

Here is an example: An otherwise good employee who has recently been late three days in a row, when confronted by a supervisor who starts off by being critical might respond this way: "What's wrong! What



***Always coach to the highest organizational goals - it could be the difference between developing respect or losing a decent employee!***



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do you mean, what's wrong; what's wrong with you for accusing me - remember I stay late sometimes too!"

The employee might continue, "Problem, I don't have a problem! Maybe you have a problem. I don't know why you are on my case, it is just a couple of minutes!"

The result of this confrontation very possibly is two angry people frustrated with little chance to resolve the issue without lasing resentment.

Now, a Coaching Approach might start by the manager posing Solution Focused Questions like:

- **What do I really, really, really want?**
- **When do I want it?**
- **What needs to happen to get it?**
- **What resources are available to me?**
- **How can I best use each resource?**
- **What can I begin doing now to get what I want?**

The manager might first say to himself, "I really need him to be on time, everyday, our customers

depend on it - and he needs to start immediately."

An effective coach might then begin by saying, "I noticed you have been late fifteen minutes for the last three days. You know our company value statement emphasizes customer service and being late places burdens on the rest of us to satisfy our goals and keep business coming back. Is there a reason for your lateness and how can I help you return to being on time?"

Notice the subtle difference in the tone of these questions. They depersonalize the situation and focus on positive solutions and mutual problem solving.

Maybe the employee has a legitimate reason for being late, still tardiness cannot be allowed to continue. By listening first and then emphasizing the commitment to the company's

value of customer service the coach refocuses the 'lateness issue'.



**By coaching to the 'highest goal of the organization,** the reason for being on time, its impact to the business, and its effect on others becomes the focal point thus providing a logical and more acceptable reason to change.

**When a supervisor sets aside the 'hammer of authority' and uses the 'glue of common goals', positive outcomes occur.** This is the role of the Coach as Confidant and not a policy and procedure supervisor. This method of coaching is more positive, personal and lasting. It builds respect, too often lacking in today's supervisor / subordinate relations.

Coaching should be a core competency in today's high performing workplace! By developing sound coaching skills managers, team and project leaders, team members, and fellow associates learn to work more productively together.

Try practicing Solution Focused Questions the next time you are faced with a supervisory dilemma; **remember to always coach to the highest organizational goals - it could be the difference between developing respect or losing a decent employee.**